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General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

3 (b): Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

Statement submitted by SOS Éducation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council[2]

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1] E/CN.9/2018/1.
[2] The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Population is at the center of development, in developed and developing countries. In some less developed countries, population growth remains high.

Until recently, wars, epidemics, famine, and natural disasters, have reduced the population in some parts of the world. The situation is different today. With the establishment of the United Nations, peace talks to resolve conflicts, human rights bodies, technological and scientific developments, especially in medicine and computer science, population has grown again in the second half of the twenty-first century. While population is increasing in developing countries due to the reduction of mortality rates and a high birth rate, developed countries are experiencing a reduction in population.

We must recognize the universality of the development problem and its significance, especially for the developing countries. Population appears at the core of development in the following areas:

- Demographic (city-countryside relationship, migration flows, etc.)
- Environmental (water, forest, climate, soil, etc.)
- Economic (implementation of development models in agriculture and industry, etc.)
- Political (participation of the population in the main orientations of each government, etc.).

Developing countries often share a similar history, a similar socio-cultural context, the variety of their natural wealth, the gradual transformation of the economy from rural or industrial development, and their own development style. These factors change constantly due to the significant transformations that have occurred in recent decades. Nonetheless, real structural problems such as food insufficiency, illiteracy, high mortality rate, and social inequalities exist. A majority of the population in developing countries is impoverished and marginalized as a result of the socio-political orientation of governments, sometimes against the needs of their populations.

A large population can contribute to development. In particular, if the young population is educated and well-trained; human rights are respected; democracy is respected; social infrastructure is developed (i.e. access to water services, hospitals, roads, schools, etc.); women are empowered, respected and trained; and migratory flows are managed.

The issue of development offers many topics for reflection including the nature of the relationship between the agricultural and industrial sectors. These two sectors of the economy are important and leave their imprint on the environment. In the twenty-first century, industrialization will be greatly accelerated by automation and information and communication technologies (ICTs), among others, due to the domination of the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism appears as an element that transforms new regions and the economy from peasant agriculture to commercial farming. This new situation, where the need for money is prioritized, leads to a substitution of family or community work by wage labour, the expansion of the internal market and the productive forces of development.

Capitalism is not the only force that has changed the economy. Other economic experiences that have emerged in the course of the century show that in developing countries, the relationship between industry and agriculture, cities and countryside, and population movements is constantly changing.

One can conclude that the relationship between population and development is crucial and governments' policies need to take into account the needs of the population.